

About the Talk Story Festival

WOW! A 25 YEARS of STORYTELLING CELEBRATION!

We never thought we we'd last this long and grow so popular! Below are a mixture of notes and reflections on a quarter century of hosting Hawai'i's biggest and oldest storytelling celebration. Enjoy, and COME TO THE SHOWS!

NEW LOCATION FOR 2013:

Talk Story Festival is moving to the spacious
2nd floor Ballroom of the Ala Wai Golf Clubhouse!

There will be plenty of seats & lots of evening parking!

WHAT TO EXPECT

TSF features nine excellent tellers a night. Each has 20 minutes, which is long enough to deliver a powerful tale (or two) but not endless. The program moves right along. Also, a creative light technician changes the colors according to the story (not easy at the Ala Wai). There are also awesome Sign Interpreters (with their own good light) on stage interpreting all performers. Oh, they really add a powerful presence to this rich environment! A professional sound man assures quality sound. The Talk Story Festival is a really great production!

TSF also includes a live three camera video shoot (using 'Ōlelo: Public Access TV's Mobile Studio Van and the Leeward Community College TV Pro Students.) As the tellers perform, the video is simultaneously projected onto the wall next to the stage. For the rest of the year, these videos air on 'Ōlelo, bringing TSF storytelling into O'ahu homes. This service by the Parks Department and Drama Specialist Jeff Gere has been going on for over 20 years!

Jeff Comments, "One year I popped my head into the video van to see their 'shoot'... man, you could count the nose-hairs on the teller! Fascinating! So we rigged up a sheet beside the stage and projected their video of the teller beside the stage so the audience sees what the video editor was doing. I love it!"

Storytelling and live video projection is not 'traditional.' In fact, TSF is the only storytelling festival we know of anywhere to so fully use video during the live show (and after). Here, the technology extends and enhances the drama of the live show.

NEIGHBOR ISLAND TOUR

The University of Hawai'i's Outreach College administers funding to bring artists into the public libraries state-wide. They've included many TSF mainland guests in this program over the years. This is a wonderful

partnership which allows the tellers to earn a bit more money, to perform more widely throughout the state, and to have more of an adventure. This October, Anne Glover and Anne Shimojima will be touring the public libraries. An insert in the TSF program informs our audiences of these shows (write jgere@honolulu.gov for details.)

MAINLAND TELLERS:

LYN FORD (www.storytellerlynford.com) returns for a fourth TSF (her only island performances.) She also contributed classes and told at the first two Talk Story Camps (Kualoa, '11 & '12.) She loves Hawai'i! Lyn has been featured at the National Storytelling Festival four times as well, has told at every major storytelling event in America, and has just become a member of the 'Circle of Excellence,' recognizing her as one of the nation's best tellers.

ANNE GLOVER (www.anneglover.ca) is an original, using mind-bending string figures and a stream-of-consciousness narrative. You've never heard a story told like this, and a simple shoelace will never look the same! This Victoria-based performer plies her mischief and magic globally! She was a big hit in the NOT CAMP Tour of O'ahu this summer. She will do a string/story workshop Saturday.

ANNE SHIMOJIMA (www.anneshimojima.com) is a graceful, mesmerizing storyteller with a truly vast repertoire of tales. She has performed for thirty years before audiences of all ages in every kind of venue, and she teaches too. This is a seasoned professional. She did two shows on Maui to begin the NOT CAMP Tour, and repeats her hilarious workshop on Saturday wherein participants get up and into a folktale, improvising the dialogue as they acted it out: profound fun!

HAWAII's OWN DYNAMITE TELLERS!

KATHY COLLINS (Maui, Fri & Sat) is the CEO/ DJ of the wildly popular Mana'o Radio. Her comedic alter ego, pidgin spouting 'Tita,' has brought down the house each year! She's very very popular as an emcee and performer on Maui. Her ambitious rendering of two tales from the Pele and Hi'iaka epic has been simmering for a few years waiting to 'go public.'

DAN KELIN (Honolulu Theatre for Youth Education Director, Sat) shows in his telling that he has worked for decades in the classroom: big, bold, irreverent, funny, and very moving all in one! We are always pleased when he brings his unique and peculiar version of folktales (hilarious and shocking) to TSF.

SHAIN MILLER (Sat) always has a tale. She and Jeff Gere host Story Slam Nights occasionally at her 'Ong King Art Center' in Chinatown (www.ongking.com).

LOPAKA KAPANUI (Fri) returns with chilling tales from his ghost tours. **JAMES MCCARTHY** tells and plays as often as we can fit into his schedule! **KAREN YAMAMOTO HACKLER** appeared long ago with tales collected in Japan. We are delighted to include her again this year.

SECOND TIME TELLERS: YASU ISHIDA (magic with story) with a medley of tales he's preparing to audition for Disney's Epcot Center. **KILOHANA SILVE** (hula and story) bring Hawaiian tales to the stage. She just returned from France and will teach there again in July. **PETE GRIFFIN** from Alaska, is active in storytelling nationally. He came and told last year and is doing it again.

FIRST TIMERS: ALICE ANNE PARKER & MOSES GOODS are both veteran performers, each in their own unique ways. Both have intended to tell at TSF for years, and finally they both are!

JEFF GERE, the Drama Specialist in the Parks Department, is the producer and host of the Talk Story Festival. This July, Jeff produced and hosted a 'NOT CAMP' Tour, which included Anne Glover & Anne Shimojima. Then he did a week's residency telling at the International Storytelling Center in Tennessee, and toured quickly through North Carolina, Kentucky, and Ohio. He performs at TSF if there's time or if someone suddenly cannot make the show.

SPONSOR: PUMPKINS FROM ALOUN FARMS

Jeff Gere recalls, "I had a 'good idea' one day about 7 years ago. I pulled into Aloun Farm (between Kapolei and Waipahū) to ask for pumpkins for our TSF stage. I noticed the Thai alters & portrait of the Thai King in the office. Alec Aloun greeted me and had me come into his office. After a moment of silence, he said, "We have much in common"... (see my jaw drop.) "Really? How?" said I. "I have a Masters in Traditional Thai Narratives" says Alec (see my jaw drop.) "Jataka Tales?" said I, referring to Buddhist teaching tales of Budha as an enlightened animal, Asia's Aesop Fables. He told me about a Thai farmer (his grandfather) who married a Wai'anae Hawaiian, and their grandson grew up to take over the family farm on the 'Ewa Plain. "Every summer when I was a boy we were sent to Thailand. My grandmother there told us Jataka tales all the time." We had a delightful talk. "I will give you pumpkins for as long as you want." And he has.

So why and how did this Talk Story Festival come into being anyway?

25 YEARS of TALK STORY FESTIVALS

Jeff Gere was inspired by the stories he heard visiting O'ahu's Senior Centers. These many 'talk story' sessions prompted him to produce the Talk Story Festival in 1989. The vision: to honor traditional and contemporary storytelling and oral history by creating the very best environment to present

Hawai'i's very best tellers to Hawai'i people... with a few guests added to the local mix. Nobody had ever tried to stage such a storytelling celebration in the islands.

In 1989, with no precedent, no money, a part-time aide, and Parks and Recreation staff helping, some 50 volunteer tellers donated their tales on five stages each hour for eight hours. In the following years, Gere created a non-profit, the Alliance for Culture & Arts (ACA, still assisting) to receive corporate sponsorship from the Bank of Hawai'i (1990-1998) and LavaNet (2000-2001). TSF also continually receives ongoing in-kind donations from the tellers themselves (they are not paid much for performing.) In 2000, DPR began funding this production along with staff support, the McCoy venue, and publicity.

In 1999, the format changed to offer the public three (1999-2009) evenings of storytelling at McCoy Pavilion in the Ala Moana Beach Park.

In 2010, due to the Furlough cut-backs in all City and County functions, the Festival was reduced from three to two nights of stories with an afternoon workshop.

"This festival is for anyone bright enough to walk in the door," said Gere. "It's really a show! We import the best tellers from all across Hawai'i, and a few mainland guests for fun. The stories are dramatically lit, are interpreted by incredible sign interpreters (also well lit), and video cameras record it all (with images projected on the side of the stage). The auditorium fills with people every night - our audience REALLY comes to focus, to LISTEN. It's AWESOME! You can hear the baby in the back row gurgle- it's that quiet!"

"There is a core of exceptional tellers who have a long history of giving their voices to this celebration," said Gere. "Every year I come away stunned at the power and beauty of their stories. It is a great privilege to bring this much talent before this many people in the best of listening environments. Sharing the stories with many others through media is also important to me." Talk Story TV shows have aired monthly on 'Ōlelo Community TV since 1990. The audio from these videos fed into Talk Story Radio, airing Pacific Rim stories weekly (2005-07) on Hawai'i Public Radio, KTUH, and Maui's Mana'o Radio. Many programs are still available (free pod casts) at www.talkstoryradio.com

JEFF GERE: MEMORIES from past TSFs

I remember Kumu John Keolamaka'ainanakalahuiio-kalanikamehameha'ekolu Lake doing a bilingual drama, '**The Death of Keoua.**' I remember him with Kalani Meinecke and Sam Ka'ai talking about their **Reunification Ceremony** at Pu'ukoholā Heiau, and Sam yelling, "Are you part of the Budweisah 'ohana or are you gonna learn your language?"

I remember the **War Child** session where five women shared their horrific stories of growing up in different countries amidst war. The whole audience stood applauding and weeping. Then we hugged each other.

I LOVE BIG CROWDS and Friday's Spooky show draws a big thick crowd every year. I LOVE it when 1,000 people sigh together. It is community and communion and magic and imagination wrapped into the humor and horror.

In 1997, the Bank of Hawai'i brought the Festival to the **Bishop Museum**. It started to rain hard on Spooky Night, so we went inside Hawai'i Hall and **TOTALLY PACKED** all three levels! We used every chair in the Museum, and there was thunder and lightening outside! The guard complained that kids peed on the floor in three places. "Either you scared 'em or they didn't wanna go to the lua and miss some of the stories."

In 2001, my car died. I bought the car of my housemate who was moving. It died. "What else can happen?" On the Friday of the Festival, after a dawn TV appearance, I returned to my shack behind the main house on a steep Palolo hillside and took a little nap. There was a long night ahead. I woke and went outside to pee. It was raining. I slipped, slid under the railing, and **fell 30 feet onto the rocky path below flat on my back**. I was nude. I crawled to sit in the shower for an hour. Oh, I was black and blue all over! All weekend I hurt all over, and I moved like it hurt too - so slow. Oh, I was HURT!

Another time I got a call from a teller saying, "**I can't come.**" He'd gone before a judge to contest some parking ticket that morning in Hilo on his way to the airport. It was the judge's last day on the bench, he was mad, and so he threw everyone who came before him in the slammer!

In 2006, our Sunday night show was cancelled due to an **earthquake**, so we had the guest tellers up to my house, cooked a big dinner, and we told stories in my carport by candlelight with all the neighbors. It was wonderful!

THE TUSITALA AWARD

This award recognizes exceptional people who have made a significant contribution to storytelling in Hawai'i over the course of a lifetime. It was revived at the 2002 Talk Story Festival. The award has since been given occasionally to the deserving:

- Moloka'i **John Ka'imikaua** (2006). John told twice at the Festival across the years. His hālau came and received the award – gorgeous!
- Kumu hula/composer/teacher **Winona Kapuailohiamanokalani Desha Beamer, 'Auntie Nona'** (2005). It was her last public appearance. "That night she sang to us in a very frail voice. I knew her before she moved to the Big Island. We did a kid's show in the Hawai'i Theater once when it was just a beat up old movie house - the seats were all torn up – but oh, the acoustics were marvelous! Those are cherished memories."

- Falsetto singer/teller **Kindy Sproat** (2004); frail in health, we delivered the award to him at his Kohala house on the tour that followed. What an enchanting few hours!
- Kalaupapa **Makia Malo** (2003), Hanson's Disease (leprosy) survivor, storyteller, author ("My Name is Makia," by Pamela Young, Waterhouse Press, 2012), toured many times throughout the state, the Pacific, and mainland (including the National Storytelling Festival.) He also chanted at the UN to open a Conference and Exhibit on Hanson's Disease.
- Kohala **Marie Solomon** (2002), after she passed away. "I courted her for three years. She trusted me. She came annually from Kohala - priceless sessions! She knew so much and had that kūpuna sass and charm. Once she kicked me off the stage when I tried to move her along for the next teller. We toured the State several years with Makia Malo and Sandra MacLees and visiting tellers in the 90s - even to California a few times. After she passed, I played a recording of her telling a story on my story radio show. People emailed telling how her stories moved them to tears as they sat stuck in traffic."
- The defunct Storytelling Association of Hawai'i gave this award to **Robert Cazimero, Glen Grant** (who appeared several times at Talk Story), columnist/author **Bob Krauss, Karen Keawehawai'i**, and **Lucille & Bren Brenneman** (who founded storytelling at UH in the 70s. Lucille passed away earlier this year, 2013).